

City of Morgantown
Human Rights Commission
Meeting Minutes March 20, 2014

Present: Jan Derry Dave Bott, Administrative Representative
Michael Fike Tim Hairston – Liaison w. State HRC
Brian Jara Bob Jones, Research Consultant
Don Spencer, Chair
Fran Whiteman

Meeting called to order by Don Spencer, Chair, at 6:40 p.m. Marlene Robinson-Savino and Anne Marie Lofaso had reported that they would not be able to attend.

Public Session: John Miles spoke during the public session about the costs to employers in complying with civil rights standards.

Announcements: The Commission reviewed a summary of a final report on the state legislature's work and noted its lack of action on the Employment and Housing Non-crimination Act and its work on protection of drinking water, synthetic hallucinogens, and changes in fire arms legislation. Spencer reported that the City's Home Rule application will be unveiled at the Committee of the Whole meeting on 3/30/14.

Dave Bott reported on a letter which describes evictions of two veterans participating in the Welcome Home Program. A second letter related to the lack of accessibility at the MAC facilities. Issues related to sexual assault by landlords were also considered, as was the need for students to use the personnel resources of the WVU Housing Office to better inform and protect student safety.

On a motion by Fran Whiteman, seconded by Jan Derry, the Commission voted to request that City Council send a letters of concern to members Congressional Delegation in support of full funding of the Community Development Block Grant program. Mike Fike agreed to convey a report of the action to the Council.

Minutes of the February HRC Meeting: The minutes of the regular meeting on February 20 were reviewed. Two corrections were noted: the WVU title for Brian Jara and a typo. Without further additions or corrections, the chair declared that the minutes approved as corrected.

Progress Reports: Tim Hairston reported on the February 26-27 meeting of the State Human Rights Commission and the Civil Rights Day observance at the Charleston Civic Arena. A memorial observance for the late Judge Carter, Director of the State Human Rights Commission, and her husband, Dr. Carter, former president of WV State University, was conducted s part of the State Commission session. Mary King Jacquet has been appointed Interim Director.

Don Spencer reported on the substantive progress being made by Susan Sullivan and the City IT Consultants in making the City website “Bobby Approved”.

Spencer also distributed copies of a feasibility study prepared by a committee appointed by the WVU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in response to the HRC’s proposal for the establishment of an annual WVU community human rights film festival. The Commission reviewed each of the five sections in the four page document and made several recommendations. The overall interest of the Commission was that the film festival’s mission remain focused on human rights issues – local, national and international – rather than morphing into a more art-featured film event. The Commission recommended that specific examples of human rights topics be identified for the planning committee’s work – such as, fracking, equality, holocaust, gender issues, women and racial concerns.

The Commission also recommended the changing/augmenting community participation partners to include the Community Coalition for Social Justice, Fairness WV. NAACP, Members of Diversity, the Coordinating Council for the Homeless and possibly service club organization involved in international relief. Recommended additions to the WVU organizational partner list included the WV Center for Service and Learning and the Council for International Programs. Two additions to the international partner list could be the United Nations International Film Festival and the United Nations Refugee Resettlement Program.

Human Rights Need Survey: Bob Jones provided an update on the Human Rights Need Survey project since the January meeting. He described the responses at the MLK events, the Empty Bowls event, and the Neighborhood Coordinating Council meeting. Approximately 350 surveys have been completed on the City website and in hard copy. He also cited the excellent support of the City Public Information Officer, Susan Sullivan, for her featuring the survey and links to the survey in several mailings during the past month. It was also noted that the WVU Division of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion has also placed the survey on the WVU web site.

Some feedback from the Neighborhood Coordinating Council was that the survey was too complex and would not be understood by persons who do not have the ability, time or patience to cope with its format. It was recommended that the questions be reduced to 10 rather than the 15 substantive questions which the present form contains. Bob presented a working format for a shorted version which the Commission could consider offering as an alternative when needed. The Commission reviewed the proposed “short version” and made recommended changes in wording on two of the questions.

The Commission also reviewed the Partnering Organization List for the survey campaign and discussed updates on member contacts.

Docket, Calendar, Commissioner Reports and “Tools”: There were no changes to the Docket, Calendar and no Commissioner reports presented. Don Spencer mentioned a new National League of Cities book which has been published on outstanding programs which

have been conducted by communities relating to diversity issues during the past 5 years. As the Commission continues to develop its list of potential programs and services which can be identified as responses to survey identified issues, such information may be useful.

The next meeting will be held on April 17, 2014.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:27 p. m.